United Nations E/AC.51/2002/L.6/Add.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
1 July 2002

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-second session
10 June-5 July 2002
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on the work of its forty-second session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Alejandro Torres Lépori (Argentina)

Addendum

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

(*Item 3*)

Report of the Secretary-General on efficient and effective measures for management improvement

1. At its 18th and 19th meetings, on 24 and 25 June 2002, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on efficient and effective measures for management improvement (E/AC.51/2002/2). The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the report and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

2. It was noted that the report of the Secretary-General was comprehensive in scope and provided a useful overview of work in progress with regard to measures for management improvement, both within the United Nations Secretariat and across the common system of organizations. An illustrative sample of measures taken by organizations covered seven areas of management innovations: enhancement of monitoring capacity and performance measurement; leveraging technology; streamlining rules, processes and procedures; strengthening common services; improving human resources management; strengthening financial management; and enhancing accountability and delegation of authority. Specific efforts had been taken

02-45174 (E) 020702

in the Department of Management of the United Nations Secretariat and in the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to put in place mechanisms for cooperation, learning and sharing of experience. HLCM had a particular role to play in the development of a strategy for cooperation and coordination in management improvement measures, in aggregating and analysing information and in establishing good management practice.

3. It was also noted that management improvement measures were an integral part of the Secretary-General's initiatives for reform of the Organization. Productivity remained a central concern. Monitoring the impact of improvements, to ensure that change actually happened in a verifiable way, was another critical concern. Virtually all of the organizations of the United Nations common system were learning how to tie their administrative and management activities into the overall framework of a results-based approach.

4. Delegation expressed appreciation for the manner in which a broad array of management improvement initiatives had been presented against a background of change management in the organizations. It was necessary, however, to ensure that sound coordination mechanisms were in place to ensure that good ideas were widely disseminated and that duplication of effort was avoided. At the same time, monitoring tools were needed to track progress in the different areas of work. The proposed progress and impact-reporting system being developed by the Management Policy Office of the Department of Management would be useful in that regard. A parallel mechanism was the productivity-knowledge gateway, which focused on assessing individual and team-based productivity measures.

5. Delegations supported rigorous efforts towards achieving an electronic United Nations. Many organizations had made a considerable investment in information and communications technology, and it was important that every effort be made to share best practices. The role of such technology was central to future management improvements. Some difficulties had been encountered in the efforts to more closely integrate information and communications technology platforms across organizations, but the HLCM network and the United Nations information and communications technology strategy were addressing those issues.

6. A number of delegations observed that future work on management improvement measures needed to focus on both their quantitative and qualitative impact. The view was expressed that the report had presented a positive picture without examining the shortfalls or negative aspects of improvement measures. The view was also expressed that the nature of the report was more quantitative than qualitative. While a considerable amount of work had been undertaken by the United Nations and the other organizations of the common system, specific efforts should continue towards developing more coherent approaches and a more detailed impact assessment of improvement measures. Delegations acknowledged the difficulty of pinning down real results, for example the results of introducing new processes or technology. It was not sufficient to claim that management improvement measures were effective or efficient: the results of change had to be demonstrated by comparing the situation before and after specific projects were carried out. On the other hand, delegations expressed the view that there had been noticeable improvements in such areas as the streamlining of rules, the introduction of such procedures as the new Galaxy system for recruitment, placement, promotion

and mobility, and the development of management indicators (the key item management-reporting system). It would be useful to emphasize the linkage between management improvement measures and delegating authority to programme managers while holding them accountable for decisions. There again, monitoring would be crucial.

7. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts of the Secretary-General to use the High-level Committee on Management of CEB to stimulate the exchange of experience and good management practice. Within the United Nations, the role of the Senior Management Group, the Steering Committee on Reform and Management and the Management Policy Committee were critical. The use of inter-agency networking and the development of the progress and impact reporting system were broadly supported: in future, emphasis would have to be placed on measuring actual improvement rather than on simply describing the intent of management improvement initiatives.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on efficient and effective measures for management improvement (E/AC.51/2002/2). The Committee was of the view that a broad range of initiatives had been presented in a useful format. At the same time, there remained scope for more rigorous analysis of the specific impact of improvement measures and for analysis of the problems and challenges faced by the organizations of the system. The Committee welcomed the examples cited in the report in regard to the sharing of experience and good management practice.

9. The Committee affirmed its support for the mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation and networking that had been placed under the aegis of the High-level Committee on Management of CEB. It also recommended that the work of the Management Policy Committee of the Department of Management should go forward with regard to the development of the progress and impact reporting system, both as a monitoring tool and as a means of assessing more rigorously the impact of management improvement measures. The Committee felt that the strategy proposed in the report for intensifying inter-agency knowledge-sharing and assessment of the results of management improvement measures should receive priority so that future reports would be more focused on impact analysis.